

RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA

An overview of research and
examples of good practice
in the EU Member States, 1995-2000

on behalf of the

European Monitoring Centre
on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna
(EUMC)

by

European Research Centre
on Migration and Ethnic Relations
(ERCOMER)

Edited by Jessika ter Wal

Vienna, February 2002

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PREFACE

The research interest in analysing the way mass media report on ethnic issues has increased in the Member States over the last decades. And for this reason the EUMC decided to bring together the major research reports and their findings over the last five years in this report "RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA - an overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000".

The project has been carried out by Dr Jessika ter Wal, at Ercomer, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to her for her excellent work. The report underlines the importance of media research in the area of racism and diversity.

The mass media, and especially the news media, have an unequivocal position in society when it comes to establishing and disseminating common cultural references. The mass media have an influence on people's attitudes as well as our common knowledge, but not always in the expected and desired ways.

The active democratic role of the mass media in society can be influenced by a number of factors. The way the mass media represent, focus and give voice to different actors and incidents in society could have the unintentional result of strengthening a racist discourse instead of fighting against it. Mass media reporting is especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in our society.

The mass media organisations in the Member States take different initiatives to promote cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, such as developing codes of conduct, recruiting broadcasters from the migrant and minority communities and training the personnel from multiethnic societies.

The report has already attracted a lot of interest from researchers, from journalists as well as from media organisations. I hope that the report will be of practical use to all those interested in the fight against racism and especially those working in the media.

Beate Winkler

Director of the EUMC

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4.9 LUXEMBOURG (LUX)

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4.9.1 INTRODUCTION

Luxembourg is one of the smallest and richest countries in the world. These two characteristics explain the dynamic nature of its economy and, in turn, the varied composition of its labour market (Fehlen, 1997). Of a total of 420,000 inhabitants, 35 per cent are foreigners, of whom 30 per cent come from the European Union (of whom many are EU officials) and five per cent from non-EU countries (Sesopi, 1997a). The latter group is comprised mostly of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, migrants from former Portuguese colonies such as the Cape Verde Islands or Brazil, and a small part from America. There are also about 80,000 cross-border workers from France, Belgium and Germany, and former labour migrants mainly from Portugal (60,000) and Italy (25,000). The case of Luxembourg thus shows how in a limited space a differentiated multi-lingual population lives together.

Another unique characteristic of Luxembourg is the absence of research centres on the themes of racism and xenophobia. Although NGOs and associations have edited publications on this issue independent from university support, unfortunately these studies are fragmented, with a limited scope, and are dependent on personal initiatives. Despite the intellectual goodwill of the immigrant associations, they alone cannot launch a proper research programme without the political will of the state or the support from a European programme. The problem is that, to date, there are hardly any proper empirical studies on racism and media in Luxembourg. Very limited information is given on stereotypes in the press, and some observations are found on the position of asso-

⁸⁵ With the collaboration of Sylvain Besch (Sesopi) and Fabrice Montebello (CLAE), to whom many thanks for their assistance.

ciations in news making, the consumption of media by foreign communities (with related language barriers), control mechanisms, and the access to the production of news by foreign communities and associations.

The following sections aim to suggest possible elements for further research, by indicating the characteristics of the media landscape (Section 2) and reproducing some of the rare observations on the practices of media in reporting on racism and cultural diversity (Section 3). Some institutional and other initiatives to promote cultural diversity and combat racism are discussed in the Section 4. The final part summarises the main findings and crucial points for improvement, which are presently being discussed by those concerned in media, politics and NGOs.

4.9.2 GENERAL INFORMATION ON MEDIA

The little information available on media and cultural diversity in Luxembourg shows that language is one of the key issues (Fehlen, 1998). Indeed, although the Luxembourg media reflect the linguistic diversity of the population, there is a preponderance of German and Luxembourgian language media. A few radio programmes and periodicals target particular ethnic minority audiences.

4.9.2.1 THE MEDIA IN LUXEMBOURG

The press occupies an important position within Luxembourg media. Of a population of 420,000 Luxembourg has a daily newspaper circulation of 156,000 issues. The five main newspapers are *Tageblatt*, *Luxembourg Wort*, *Letzebürger Journal*, *Zeitung vum Letzebürger Vollek* and *le Républicain Lorrain*. Except for the latter, it is predominantly a German language press. The *Luxembourg Wort* has a circulation of 82,000 issues and is the largest newspaper. It includes several pages in French to reach a French-speaking audience. Besides these newspapers, there are numerous weekly magazines, such as the German language *Letzebuenger Land*, *Revue*, and *Télécran*, the French language weekly *Le Jeudi*, and the mixed German and French language *Voxx*. Finally, there is the press of the trade unions, and other periodicals produced by foreign communi-

ties and targeted at their specific national constituencies. Two periodicals of foreigners' associations are the magazine *Horizon* published by the *Comité de Liaison et d'Action des Étrangers* (CLAE, Cooperation and Action Committee for Foreigners), and *Ensemble*, published by the Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés (ASTI, *Association for the Support to Immigrant Workers*) both edited in French.

Among the six national radio stations, *Radio ARA* was launched by solidarity associations and aims to incorporate the reality of the multicultural Luxembourg in its programming. This radio station is mentioned in a report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2000) as a positive example of media contributing to combating intolerance against people who are victims of social exclusion. It has 50,000 regular listeners in Luxembourg, and presenters and guests of the shows are multilingual (French, Portuguese and Serbo-Croat) (ECRI, 2000). Foreigners' associations launched a second national radio, *Radio Latina*. It provides information in Portuguese, and dedicates particular hours of broadcasting to information in the Italian, Spanish and Creole languages.

The only Luxembourg TV station is the commercial channel *RTL tele Letzebürg*. Programming is mainly in the Luxembourgian language. Only the evening news is dubbed in French, but available only to those who have a stereo television with a second audio channel.

4.9.2.2 CONSUMER PRACTICES

The survey and opinion poll institute ILRES conducted a survey for the *Sesopi Centre Intercommunautaire* about media consumption (Sesopi, 1998: 38-40). It revealed that 59 per cent of respondents read mainly German language newspapers. This preference is more marked among the Luxembourg population, where 71 per cent read German language newspapers and 20 per cent read the French language press. The other nationalities prefer the French language newspapers. The Portuguese, who represent the largest ethnic community, mostly read the French (61 per cent) and Portuguese (27 per cent) language press. The main language for radio is Luxembourgish (64.5 per cent), followed by French (16 per cent)

and German (12 per cent). Luxembourgiens show a preference for RTL (82 per cent) and German radio (12 per cent). The Portuguese listen to radio in Portuguese (41 per cent) and French (36 per cent) (Sesopi, 1998). Finally, as far as television is concerned, 40 per cent of the population watches TV in German, 34 per cent watches the French programmes and 18 per cent the programmes in Luxembourgian language. Of the Luxembourgian population, 50 per cent chose programmes in German, 25 per cent in French and 24 per cent in Luxembourgian (Sesopi, 1998). However, the Luxembourgian programming is relatively poor, and most people have either cable or satellite television (no data are available on the consumption of non-terrestrial media).

Thus, the print media predominantly use German, while another (foreign) majority uses mainly French. However, French is the most common language among foreigners: 92 per cent of foreigners who arrived in Luxembourg after 1990 speak French. French is also the most commonly used language at work, in commerce and administrative matters. Foreigners are excluded from the dominant media supply, and thus without a true censorship, their separateness and segregation is increased: 'Because of the language choice, the press in Luxembourg excludes one third of the population from public debate' (CLAE, 1998). Thanks to new technologies, foreigners receive media from their countries of origin (long-wave radio, cable or satellite television, foreign newspapers, and the Internet). Thus segregation is achieved unwittingly since media consumption is determined by foreign origin.

4.9.3 MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

Unfortunately, there is no proper research available to date regarding the representation of immigrants or 'foreigners' in the Luxembourg media. The few observations on this theme are restricted to general news making practices, and there is only one study, a Master's thesis, that analysed the images of immigrant women in the Belgian and Luxembourgian press (Medernach, 1996). The author analysed articles in the main Luxembourgian newspapers on immigrant women (including photos, images and written text) during the year 1995. Medernach found that, on the

one hand, there is a manifest absence of immigrants in the press (the author speaks of a taboo subject). On the other hand, when the issue is covered, the media give a stereotypical image of immigrant women; that is, they are mostly portrayed in traditional dress of their countries of origin during celebrations. Images of refugee women from the former Yugoslavia were not found in the press during 1995.

In 1997, in the framework of the European Year Against Racism, the association *Sesopi*, which is interested in themes of immigration and integration⁸⁶, organised a seminar on the relation between media and racism. The editor-in-chief and director of *Luxembourg Wort*, the president of the Journalists Association and a representative of *Radio ARA* all took part in this workshop. TV journalists had also been invited, but did not attend. The findings of the seminar were reported in an issue of the *Sesopi* journal *Recherche, Etude, Documentation* (RED):

in several domains of the press, the tendency exists to produce or reproduce information in an unbalanced, partial and biased way, not necessarily intentionally or because journalists would be racists, but rather because of lacking awareness on their behalf (*Sesopi*, 1997b: 60).

The dossier also criticised unintentional false reporting. The seminar appealed to the media to be vigilant, and to respect basic principles and deontological press codes, especially regarding the prohibition to use offence, defamation, slander, calumny, and racial, ethnic, religious or ideological discrimination in reporting. The existing deontological code is only for the press. The Journalists Association, present at the seminar, denounced the absence of a similar code for those working in radio and TV.

86 *Sesopi* has various aims. First, it engages in training/education and raising awareness in schools and general public opinion about foreigners in Luxembourg. Second, in collaboration with other associations (CLAE, Asti, refugee organisations), it functions as an organisation for dialogue between foreign communities and the authorities. Finally, it publishes studies and research on the presence of foreigners and their integration in Luxembourg, and the journal *Recherche, Etude Documentation*.

Another issue touched upon in the seminar, which is still an issue of debate at the time of writing, is that of press reports mentioning the nationality (or origin) of perpetrators who are arrested *flagrante delicto*. The nationality is actually mentioned quite often in crime news, in both print and broadcast media. The associations believe that such details do not add anything to the information, and may lead to stigmatising particular foreign communities. On the other hand, journalists claim that information has to be reported in its entirety, without the possibility to take into account the repercussions of such a news making policy.

Moreover, the foreign communities and associations, especially the Luxembourgian Refugee Council, a platform of 19 NGOs, expressed concern about the association of refugees from the former Yugoslavia⁸⁷ with criminality. Too frequently, a report on the refugees is followed by a crime report. According to the associations this reporting affects public opinion, in that it establishes a link between refugees and criminality. Based on a recent survey of ILRES, 53 per cent of the population considers that crime has increased due to the presence of refugees (ILRES, 2000).

4.9.4 ACTIONS TO COMBAT RACISM AND PROMOTE CULTURAL DIVERSITY

4.9.4.1 GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The *Conseil National des Programmes* (National Programme Council, CNP) was created by the law of 27 July 1991 governing electronic media. Its task is to advise the government on radio programming and to monitor the contents of radio programmes that are not submitted to the monitoring of the Independent Radio Broadcast Commission. It is also asked to launch proposals for balanced presentation of socio-cultural radio programmes and to monitor the latter. Finally, it elaborates proposals to guarantee more varied and balanced programmes to the resident population.

87 In 1998, 84 per cent of the refugee population in Luxembourg came from the former Yugoslavia, in 1999 this was 89 per cent, and in 2000 (until September), 44 per cent.

The CNP is composed of 25 members from organisations representing the social and cultural life of the country (political organisations, trade unions, and associations). They meet upon the initiative of the Council's president (CNP, 1996).

In 1995, the CNP launched a proposal that information essential to the public should be available in the most commonly used foreign languages in Luxembourg, especially information about the safety/protection of human life, which, for example, is needed in the case of a nuclear disaster. On 15 September 1997, in agreement with the *Comité de Liaison et d'Action des Étrangers* (CLAE), the CNP proposed a programme for non-Luxembourgian residents to be broadcast on *RTL tele Letzebünger*. This led to the broadcasting of the evening news in French, and a weekly programme of half an hour in the French language. The CNP also intervened on 5 February 1997 against the programme *Deckkapp* - a programme of RTL radio, which is broadcast daily at 17 hours - for having broadcast racist and xenophobic jokes. In 1999, it launched a proposal for the preservation of the Luxembourgian language in the media, which resulted in language courses and diction/presentation courses as part of adult education. Finally, the CNP received numerous complaints from political parties against the TV channel *RTL tele Letzebünger* concerning the lack of pluralism in opinions and objectivity in the programming on the legislative and European elections of 13 June 1999.

In the framework of the *European Year Against Racism*, the Luxembourg Government set up an independent non-commercial organisation, consisting of representatives of associations, trade unions and governmental bodies, which carried out about 90 projects between 1996 and 1998 (Grand Seminaire de Luxembourg, 1998). The projects include exhibitions on multiculturalism, as well as seminars and meetings on the theme of racism and xenophobia, aimed at raising public awareness concerning the phenomena related to migration.

4.9.4.2 NGO INITIATIVES

The Comité de Liaison et d'Action des Étrangers (CLAE) is an association and service centre financed by the Ministry of Family Affairs that informs foreigners about their rights and aims to facilitate their integration. The association links up about one hundred organisations (including foreigners' associations, friendship and solidarity organisations, organisations for the struggle against racism). Many cultural events are organised around issues of migration, citizenship and the struggle against racism and xenophobia.

The CLAE broadcasts three radio programmes. On *Radio Latina*, it has a weekly programme, *L'autre regard*, which presents an interview of one hour with a foreign or Luxembourgian personality on issues related to migration. Each month, the CLAE has a programme on *Radio ARA*, which is addressed especially to foreigners. It is named *Forum Social* and presents the latest news and information during one hour. Finally, on *Radio Socioculturelle* there are two 30 minute weekly programmes that give information and publicise cultural activities organised by foreigners' associations: *Au jour le jour* and *Rendez-vous*.

The CLAE also organises a cultural festival, *the Festival des Migrations, des Cultures et de la Citoyenneté*, where all associations meet during a weekend and where the public can talk with the representatives of the associations. The festival is covered by the media and gives visibility to the issues, which lay at the heart of foreigners' concerns, in a country where they are often invisible.

Indeed, on occasion of the 4th Congress of the CLAE in September 1998, it was observed that although the festival organised by this organisation received ample media coverage, this was not the case for other activities of this kind. The communication between journalists and associations is not always optimal (articles issued by the associations are sometimes not published or journalists do not respond). According to the CLAE, the press in Luxembourg gathers its information from internal channels and established sources and does not take up information from outside or new sources of information. Each community seems to have its own medium and there-

fore the larger established media can perpetuate their practice of providing information to their usual audience. But this also leads to segregating media, while there is too little exchange of information on the cultural, social and political level. Here again, language constitutes a barrier to the circulation of information, a barrier that cannot be ignored. On the basis of these observations, the Committee recommended a number of positive actions (CLAE, 1998):

- to organise training in communication and media, for both associations and journalists, with the aim of raising awareness of the situation of foreigners in Luxembourg.
- to support the creation of a deontological press code.
- to increase the presence of non-Luxembourgiens in all media, with information, background and opinion articles on the situation in Luxembourg and the needs of the foreign communities.
- to present information in the language shared by most foreigners, which is French, in order to avoid a segregation of nationalities.
- to contribute to a critical reading of the press and journalists who are often prisoners of the prejudice common in their environment and of the constraints of their work.
- to oppose measures for financial support that are directed exclusively (and in a discriminatory way) at newspapers written in Luxembourgian, German or French, and ask that these subsidies be extended to newspapers in other languages, especially if they are directed at larger audiences.

Another example of the initiatives of associations is that of the documentation centre of the *Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés* (ASTI). In 1998, it launched a project in which elementary school classes participated in the creation of a radio programme, *Schoulen op Antenn* (Schools on the Antenna), to present the intercultural dimension of the themes discussed by the children. This weekly programme was broadcast on *Radio Socio-Culturelle*.

4.9.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Language is one of the key issues in media and cultural diversity in Luxembourg. Whereas the majority of foreign communities speak and communicate among each other in French (92 per cent of the foreigners who arrived in Luxembourg after 1990 use French), the Luxembourg media uses mostly German and is offering only very limited translation (e.g. of TV evening news) in French. Hence, it is observed that foreign communities - due to language barriers and media policies - are actually excluded from the media stage, i.e. from consumption of (a large part of) the mainstream media. This has led to a segregation of media and information supply, where foreign communities find niches of information for their own group, a phenomenon, which hinders intercultural exchange and maintains a segregationist logic. This exclusion is subtle because it is based on linguistic difference rather than on evident or open censorship. Moreover, foreigners mostly use media from the countries of origin, and this also maintains a situation of segregated foreign communities. This segregationist logic is no longer based on geographical space, but is entirely shaped by media consumption determined by the foreign origin of the individual.

This situation is further aggravated by the difficulty mentioned by foreigners' associations in being considered as regular news sources by the larger media. Nevertheless, there are some positive signs and changes. In particular several radio programmes, with the support of associations and NGOs, broadcast educational and other programmes that reflect the cultural diversity of Luxembourg. Some positive developments are also registered in providing partial TV and press information to the French speaking public (in the form of extra pages or double sound).

An effective control mechanism for Luxembourg radio broadcasters is that of the official *Conseil National des Programmes*, which has been able to denounce and act against several instances of biased reporting and racist language. It has also effectively advocated the dissemination of information in the French language. Deontological codes exist only for print journalists and is not specific about foreigners' issues; the little information on the press portrayal of

migrants, however, suggests that they are either absent or represented negatively or stereotypically. This was found in particular for refugees from the former Yugoslavia frequently associated with crime; and the absence and stereotypical image of immigrant women in the Luxembourg press. A more positive image may emerge from the cultural festivals organised by foreigners' associations, which the press occasionally covers.

Another major problem in Luxembourg press seems to be invisibility, and the unequal criteria of establishing newsworthy events related to foreigners. Overall, however, although associations and NGOs have tried to address the issue of the role of the media in reproducing prejudice and inequality, journalists seem to defend first of all their own professional values. Despite the positive initiatives mentioned above, on occasions where the role of media was discussed (for example in the discussion on the mention of foreign origin in crime reports), journalists showed little awareness of the media's role in the reproduction of ethnic prejudice.

Only with the pressure of official controlling bodies and NGOs is the problem of communication barriers between the different foreign populations living in Luxembourg addressed more openly in recent years. The discussion and controversy on the problem of segregation in the media realm is still ongoing among representatives of political institutions and foreigners' associations, on the one hand, and media representatives on the other, with the aim of creating a common media environment that can be shared by both Luxembourgiens and foreigners.

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Action solidarité tiers-monde (ACTM)

<http://www.restena.lu>

Caritas Fédération luxembourgeoise d'œuvre catholique de charité

<http://www.caritas.lu>

Research centres:

Centre documentation sur les migrations humaines :

<http://www.migcendo.lu>

Centre d'étude et de recherche francophone :

<http://www.phi.lu/cerf.html>

Centre de recherche public-centre universitaire :

<http://www.crpcu.lu>

Centre de recherche public G.Lippmam :

<http://www.crppl.lu>